

# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## **MILL SHOALS MAN RECEIVES TWENTY YEAR SENTENCE FOR ROLE IN METHAMPHETAMINE CONSPIRACY**

Randy G. Massey, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, today announced that on October 13, 2006, **RUSSELL J. PRAGIT**, age 40, of Mill Shoals, Illinois, was sentenced in United States District Court to a term of 240 months imprisonment for his role in a large methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution conspiracy centered in Wayne and White Counties.

Under Federal law, parole has been abolished and defendants are required to serve at least 85 percent of their sentences.

In addition to the term of imprisonment, PRAGIT was ordered to pay a fine and special assessment totaling \$975 and was placed on a term of 10 years supervised release to follow his incarceration.

PRAGIT was charged along with 29 other defendant by a Federal Grand Jury in July 2005 with conspiring to manufacture and distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. PRAGIT pled guilty to that charge in May 2006.

PRAGIT's conviction and sentence resulted from a long term investigation into the manufacture of methamphetamine in Wayne and White counties. Thus far, that investigation, which began in 2003, has resulted in the federal indictment of 33 individuals in related cases who, in total, were responsible for the manufacture or attempted manufacture of the equivalent of over 400,000 grams of methamphetamine. In addition to the 33 defendants who have been indicted federally, over 20 additional defendants have been prosecuted in related cases in state court by the State's Attorneys in Wayne and White Counties.

Investigation into the case is being led by the Carmi office of the Southern Illinois Drug Task Force, with the assistance of the Illinois State Police, the Fairfield Police Department, the Carmi Police Department, the White County Sheriff's Department, the Joint Narcotics Unit of the Mt. Vernon Police Department and Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, the Wayne County State's Attorney's Office, the White County State's Attorney's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James M. Cutchin.